



For a  
workers'  
government

# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 384 11 November 2015 30p/80p

[www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

## LABOUR: STOP EXPULSIONS OF CORBYN SUPPORTERS



**Join Labour! Join Young Labour!**



## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

### We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

### Contact us:

• 020 7394 8923 • [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

• Printed by Trinity Mirror

## Get Solidarity every week!

- Trial sub, 6 issues £5 ☐
- 22 issues (six months). £18 waged ☐ £9 unwaged ☐
- 44 issues (year). £35 waged ☐ £17 unwaged ☐
- European rate: 28 euros (22 issues) ☐ or 50 euros (44 issues) ☐

Tick as appropriate above and send your money to:  
20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG  
Cheques (£) to "AWL".

Or make £ and euro payments at [workersliberty.org/sub](http://workersliberty.org/sub).

Name .....

Address .....

I enclose £ .....



## May's Spies

By Lizzie Brooks

The draft investigatory powers bill, also known as the Snoopers' Charter, will grant new surveillance powers to police and security services if passed, allowing them to track every UK citizen's use of the internet without any judicial check: their browsing histories, messages, and so on.

The bill is overwhelmingly undemocratic. The surveillance activities will be immune from legal due process. For example, no questions can be asked during any legal proceeding that might indicate that surveillance has occurred. This is presumably to guarantee that the general public don't learn the degree to which we are being watched and followed.

Government orders to tech companies to hand over their data, and their customer's data, will always be accompanied by a gagging order. In other words, companies will not be able to reveal they have handed over data to the police or government. Criminal sanctions are in place to



punish whistleblowers, not to check abuse of their powers by police and security services.

Nor do orders need a warrant, granted by the court, in all cases. There is no in-built requirement for judicial approval, orders can simply come from the government agency.

We should always be worried when the government makes moves to make its actions less accountable.

**The Snoopers' Charter is couched in terms of counter-extremism, but the real threat facing the general public is an increasingly powerful, and unaccountable state.**

## Labour By Sacha Ismail



**In addition to the significant number of Corbyn supporters' groups established during the Labour leadership election — which have all changed their name to some variant of "Momentum" — new Momentum groups are now springing up across the country.**

According to the Momentum office, there are 80 groups around Britain, with more being set up all the time.

There is clearly an issue about the lack of a democratic national structure for Momentum. However, the central apparatus is generally being helpful and supportive of local groups.

Lewisham for Corbyn — Momentum held its third open meeting on 9 November. Once again more than eighty people attended, this time for a debate with Labour councillor Luke Sorba about what the movement should demand Labour councils do about cuts. Two other Lewisham councillors were also present. This kind of debate has barely taken place since 2010, despite the scale of local government cuts. The model should be spread to other Momentum groups — most cities have left-leaning Labour councillors who supported Corbyn but currently say that Labour councils have no choice but to implement cuts. Lewisham Momentum will publish speeches and notes from its debate soon.

The meeting also agreed, enthusiastically, to promote the Red Labour statements against expulsions and suspensions of Workers' Liberty supporters and other socialists from the Labour Party, and send them to other Momentum groups.

Since it was founded, Lewisham for Corbyn — Momentum has drawn numerous people into activity, promoted motions and other interventions in the local Labour Parties, held debates, organised street activity on issues including voter registration and the Trade Union Bill and been central to setting up a Lewisham Young Labour group. This was only possible because of learning from other groups established earlier, during the leadership campaign. Workers' Liberty comrades played an important part in doing that.

Merseyside Momentum, previously Merseyside Labour Left, had 75 people at its last organising meeting. It is organising a local labour movement/left conference on 28 November. Sessions and workshops will include democratising the Labour Party; economic alternatives to austerity; organising students and young workers; women's liberation; the housing crisis; debate on councillors and the cuts; and revitalising our trade unions. The Merseyside comrades say it would be great if people from other Momentum groups come along too.

**The conference is also a good model — a step towards the kind of broad labour movement conferences we need everywhere to discuss the way forward.**

## Stop bans at unis

By Omar Raii

**The proclivity for censorship in some student unions isn't going away.**

University College London Union has refused to allow Macer Gifford to speak. He is a British man who last year travelled to Rojava, Kurdistan, to fight with the YPG against Daesh.

Reasons given by the student union included that they were afraid that him speaking "could lead to others going and fighting in the conflict".

Where does this logic end? Should no meetings be held to discuss conflicts? Should we stop the British Army having stalls at freshers' fair in case someone goes to "fight in conflicts"? Why are soldiers

allowed, but not Macer Gifford?

The union apparently responded to the organisers in the Kurdish Society with the statement "in every conflict there are two sides, and at UCLU we want to avoid taking sides in conflicts." Student union should absolutely take stances in defence of justice in international issues, whether it be on abortion rights or opposition to repressive regimes. In any case the union has taken partisan stances in the past on issues such as Israel-Palestine, and quite rightly.

**A change.org petition has gathered thousands of signatures demanding that UCLU let Gifford speak. Put pressure on UCLU and other student unions to be more open to discussion.**



# Labour: no bans, no expulsions!

By Ed Maltby

**The suspension from the Labour Party of Jeremy Corbyn's adviser Andrew Fisher, for tweeting joke support for Class War against prospective Labour MP Emily Benn, makes it clear what is happening.**

Blairites are trying to paint the mass democratic Corbyn surge in conspiratorial terms, and “criminalise” the wider left. They want to undermine the new leadership. Emily Benn publicly supported the Women's Equality Party, but with impunity.

Insiders say some hundreds of Labour Party members or would-be members remain expelled or excluded from the patchy and partially-reversed purge during the leadership

contest. At least one has been expelled since.

I have received a letter from Labour's Compliance Unit, dated 14 October, expelling me for allegedly “having been” a member of Workers' Liberty.

At least three other comrades, Labour Party members of many years standing who support the ideas of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, remain expelled from before September: Vicki Morris, Daniel Randall, and Liam McNulty.

AWL is a revolutionary socialist organisation that has not stood candidates against the Labour Party in recent times and called for a Labour vote at the last general election.

Under any reasonable due process, someone who has had an allegation made against them should not be summarily “punished”. The

allegation should be evidenced, and the accused given both a right to hear the charges and an opportunity to respond.

Not when it comes to the Labour Party's shadowy and unelected Compliance Unit. None of us was presented with any specific allegations, let alone any evidence, or the source of the allegation. Even though the letters made no mention of a right of appeal, all four have appealed.

The rule cited for exclusions was Chapter 2 clause 1.4.B, to the effect that any member “who joins and/or supports a political organisation other than an official Labour group or unit of the party... shall automatically be ineligible to be or remain a Party member.”

This rule is very vague. Any political organisation other than an official

Labour group — CND? LRC? Friends of the Earth? It could not be enforced literally without mass expulsions. It therefore functions as an arbitrary, bureaucratic instrument, used for administrative exclusions on ideologically-driven grounds.

Socialists who have argued and fought for a Labour vote in the labour movement have been expelled yet, for example, Frank Field publicly talks about supporting non-Labour candidates in elections (and has done so in the past), and Simon Danczuk writes a regular newspaper column attacking the party.

There is also a sound precedent for current and avowed members of AWL being accepted as Labour Party members.

The Labour Party used to have a “proscribed list” of

groups whose members were banned, mostly groups linked to the Communist Party. That list was abolished in 1973.

The Independent Labour Party, which was a founding group of the Labour Party in 1900, split away in 1932 and contested parliamentary elections against Labour up to February 1974. In 1975, it decided to redefine itself as a “political pressure group”, but was explicit that the new ILP continued the old ILP. It was accepted back into Labour, and rightly so. It's still around.

The same approach should apply to Workers' Liberty as to the ILP. And, for sure, no-one should be excluded for “thought-crime” of being interested in the ideas of Workers' Liberty, circulating *Solidarity*, or attending discussions or-

ganised by Workers' Liberty. The left in the Labour Party needs to stand united against the purge. We should take up a joint campaign, not only against these expulsions, but against the worrying lack of due process and selective use of administrative exclusions in the party.

We should demand an end to witch-hunting and assert that the Labour Party should be open to all socialists who pledge to support Labour in present and future elections.

**Unless we do this all them longer-term opportunities presented Corbyn's victory, to reforge a militant socialist labour movement will be pushed back.**

• Red Labour statement against the witchhunts: [bit.ly/1RLdo4u](http://bit.ly/1RLdo4u)

# Tories push for free market universities

By Kelly Rogers

**Less than 48 hours after ten thousand students hit the streets calling for free education and living grants for all on 4 November, Universities Minister Jo Johnson announced the long-awaited Green Paper on Higher Education.**

If the proposals become law, it would mean nothing short of the end of public higher education.

This Green Paper follows neatly on from the fee hike of 2010. £9,000 tuition fees ushered in a new type of education system. Students have to make astronomical investments in their education.

Rather than education being about a love of learning, or for the social good, going to university is now a means of improve one's employability and giving oneself an edge in an insecure job market.

Universities are becoming factories modelling students in the shape of the ideal graduate worker under capitalism. This will only get worse. If we hand over the power to set fees to cabinet ministers, tuition fees under the Tories will rapidly rise. Within a few years fees will be uncapped. Future students will be taking out mortgage-level debts in order to stay in education.

One of the other more

worrying aspects of the Green Paper is the fleshing out of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which measures teaching against a set of market-oriented metrics and tick-boxes. TEF will be ramped up, using data from the highly flawed National Student Survey (NSS) to back up this policy.

The NSS functions on the basis that students are consumers, and asks questions to fit this agenda. The answers that students give aren't used for the benefit of students' education, but to bully staff and justify course cuts and closures.

TEF will now seek to measure “value for money”, implement “reputational and financial” incentives and penalties for institutions that fail to meet its market-focused standards.

The TEF narrative ignores the fact that good teaching is tied, first and foremost, to the quality of working conditions for teaching staff. Already staff at all levels are facing huge amounts of pressure from management to study, research, write, teach, mark, and hold office hours in a short working week.

Graduate Teaching Assistants, on the lower end of the pay scale and typically on precarious contracts, often find themselves earning less than the equivalent of the Living Wage but are

increasingly overstretched, working much more than their paid hours. This is having a huge impact on the mental health of academic staff, exhausted by their workload and insecurity.

The Green Paper hopes to enforce graduated tuition fees between institutions. Universities will be judged according to graduate employment data in order to qualify for higher caps on fees. Arts, humanities and social science universities and departments will inevitably take the hit as graduates of these subjects are less likely to enter highly lucrative careers.

Educational programmes offered by universities will be whittled down. Academic diversity and freedom will be diminished. Critical thinking, empowerment, and the development of art and ideas, will no longer be of concern.

This Green Paper threatens a much more damaging attack on higher education than the fee hike in 2010. It will be harder to fight against because at first glance it seems quite technical, in contrast to the clear attack that was the trebling of tuition fees. But this Green Paper means the full marketisation of the higher education sector, and almost certainly uncapped fees. Our vision of public, accessible education funded

by taxing the rich, for the benefit of everybody, will become almost impossible to reach.

To win, we need students and staff organising together to resist these changes, through protests, occupations and strikes.

**But with NUS and UCU currently apprehensive about leading the fight, mobilisation at the grassroots level of these organisations and on university campuses is necessary to defeat it.**

- Full Green Paper [bit.ly/1Peri0X](http://bit.ly/1Peri0X)
- How to fight: [www.anti-cuts.com](http://www.anti-cuts.com)



Students marching on November 4th

## What the government is proposing:

- Tuition fees to be set by ministers without a vote in Parliament. Unlimited, unaccountable fee rises, setting the stage for uncapped fees within a few years.
- Fees to rise at least with inflation from 2017. In order for universities to qualify for this steady raising of the fees cap, they will have to meet standards laid out by the market-oriented Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).
- A ramping up of the TEF. Universities' performance based on market-focused metrics, such as graduate employment. This will calculate “good teaching” on the basis of the degree to which subjects are focused towards pleasing employers and big business.
- The Research Excellence Framework (REF) will become narrower, more exacting, and more metric-focused, further restricting academic freedom and debate.
- Private providers of education to be given help to cut into public universities with quicker access to funding and no caps on student numbers; it will be easier for institutions to meet the standards to call themselves a university and award degrees.
- Parallel development of the management of “exit” of institutions from the market. This tells us that the Tories are expecting some publicly-funded universities to collapse under the pressure of fully-private institutions entering the market.
- Probable increased government control of student unions, tied to the kind of undemocratic measures in the current anti-trade union bill. They are seeking to undermine our right and ability to defend ourselves collectively through our unions.
- Universities will no longer have to comply with Freedom of Information requests.



# Sanders: welfare statism is not enough

## Letters



**Bernie Sanders has a very real chance of becoming the next president of the United States.**

He doesn't exactly have the most stiff competition. The only legitimate candidate he has to beat for the Democratic Party nomination, Hillary Clinton, is a criminal whose inconsistency on policy and questionable moral compass is not unknown to anybody in the country.

The other party in the bipartisan system, the Republican Party, still has a candidate pool the size of a small town to select from, the two most popular of which, Donald Trump and Ben Carson, aren't even members of the Republican National Convention, and stand little chance of winning the nomination. Sanders is a self-proclaimed socialist. A victory for Bernie Sanders as President of the United States would be a massive victory for the socialist movement worldwide. Right?

It depends on perspective. First of all, Sanders claims to be Democratic Socialist, when in fact his policies make it clear that he is a Social Democrat. A welfare statist, in other words, or more accurately, an elderly man with a Scandinavian fetish. One would be hard pressed to locate a speech of his that is free of allusions to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, or Finland.

### GOOD SIGN

**Regardless, Sanders continues to call himself a socialist, and he has yet to be devoured by a mob with pitchforks and torches. That is a good sign in a country known for its intolerance of socialism both domestically and abroad.**

In addition to episodes such as Operation Condor, the Palmer Raids, McCarthyism, Sedition, and the backing of coup after coup against democratically elected socialist leaders, the USA also imprisoned perhaps the greatest socialist to ever come from America, Eugene Debs.

Bernie is bringing the notion of socialism into the public domain for the first time since the 1950s. He's making it pop-



ular too, Sanders is quite obviously the popular favourite, though direct democracy is not incorporated into the presidential election process.

So what if Sanders were elected? He certainly isn't popular among the 1%, or any significant portion of the upper class. Even the affluent around me are extra hostile towards Sanders as opposed to other liberal candidates, which is a good sign. Welfare statism is the least egregious form of capitalism. Sanders advocates for many well-intentioned domestic reforms, such as a crackdown on white-collar crimes, legalization of marijuana and decriminalization of other narcotics, deprivatisation of prisons and hospitals, and education reform. But is it a livable alternative to socialism?

Not by a long shot. In a country as large as the United States, it would take much more than the strategies used by Scandinavia to sustain a welfare state. Robert Biel does a phenomenal job outlining most or all of the reasons capitalism cannot continue to exist, most or all of the reasons it is bound to collapse, and welfare statism accentuates almost all of these. The only way Bernie could provide the wealth resources to enact all his policies would be through ramped up imperialism.

That's the worst thing about Bernie Sanders, his foreign

policy. Only small hints of it can be found in his speeches, but its imperialist nature is made abundantly clear by his voting history.

The independent candidate from Vermont voted in favour of both the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, contrary to his own claims, and has been verbally supportive of intervention in Syria. Sanders voted in favour of sending a huge aid package to the coup government in Ukraine, and has supported Israel in actions against Gaza and Palestine. When asked why he refused to stand against Israel's actions, Sander's responded, "'Excuse me! Shut up! You don't have the microphone.'

Even worse, in my own biased opinion as a Yugoslav at heart, Sanders supported continued NATO intervention in Yugoslavia in 1999, the deadly crusade against Kosovo. According to a Will Miller article titled, "Bernie the Bomber's Bad Week", twenty-five people occupied his office to protest him as a result, and Bernie had fifteen arrested for trespass. One of Sanders' staff members, Jeremy Brecher, quit his job over it. Sanders recently came out on TV saying he fully supports US interventionism.

Bernie Sanders is an old man that grew up in the thick of the Cold War. Maybe in his eyes, he's radical enough to be one of the "evil empire's socialists", but in reality he's just a plain old liberal, and an enemy of socialism.

Bernie has gifted the world with some gems reinforcing this fact. He can be quoted calling Hugo Chavez, "dead communist dictator,". When it was suggested by conservative Mike Huckabee that "Lenin and Stalin would love this stuff," Sanders responded, "but that's not socialism, that's totalitarianism".

Coincidentally, Lenin perfectly described people like Bernie Sanders as "opportunists and social-chauvinists," saying, "They are defending the temporary privileges of a minority of the workers..." All candidates for the presidency this cycle are just as toxic as Bernie, if not more so, so he might be the best to support of the bunch, but I would suggest you not waste your time at all.

**We need, as Lenin said in 1916, a leader to, "go down lower and deeper, to the real masses... teach the masses to appreciate their true political interests, to fight for socialism and for the revolution."**

Nolan Grunski, USA

## Land Value Tax and gentrification

**I agree with the main points made by all contributors in the discussion on gentrification (*Solidarity* 378, 379, 381, and 382).**

I particularly endorse the condemnation of the vandalism inflicted on the "Cereal-Killer" cafe. The futility and stupidity of this "action" by a bunch of apolitical louts masquerading as anarchists reminded me of the equally futile and pointless spate of cottage-burning by a small group of Welsh nationalists calling themselves the "Sons of Glyndwr" back in the 80s. Their targets were second homes bought by English people. This campaign of arson, which went on for a few years, achieved precisely nothing and eventually petered out.

None of the contributors have mentioned the possibility that a Land Value Tax may help to curb the worst excesses of gentrification, particularly the displacement of long-established residents.

A Land Value Tax (LVT) is a tax on the rental value of the undeveloped land, ignoring any buildings, amenities etc. actually on the land. It is not a property tax, nor a wealth tax. LVT would encourage landowners to use their land in some way. It would be a strong disincentive to "hoard" or "sit" on land. In other words, it would deter land speculation.

Brownfield site development would be boosted, while the increased home-building that would ensue would help keep rents down as more homes would be available both for established residents and new comers. A certain percentage of the income from LVT could also be ploughed back into the community and used to bolster or subsidise services important for established residents, e.g. public laundries, local bus services, community centres, pubs, corner shops. Because land prices are inextricably linked to property prices, a LVT

would restrain property prices, benefitting everyone. LVT is not a panacea, but it would go some way to alleviating some of the worst aspects of gentrification.

However, I don't think gentrification can be stopped. There is something inevitable about the process and not all of it is undesirable (as previous contributors have pointed out). There is much more to be said about LVT. There are strong arguments for and against. It would be a good debate to have aired in the pages of *Solidarity*.

My second point relates specifically to Bruce Robinson's call for the nationalisation of land (*Solidarity* 381). I think this would be a retrograde step (even if it were achievable).

Land nationalisation would be such an immense step because land touches on every aspect of our lives. Advocates of land nationalisation would need to explain how they are going to administer, control and plan for such diverse and demanding (and potentially conflicting) areas of social and economic practice as farming policy (which would include your attitude and policies towards the National Farmers Union), the Common Agricultural Policy, land tax, land inheritance, the National Parks, green belt policy ecological issues, planning permits, rural transport and amenities etc. etc.

This is simply too much. There is a great danger that nationalisation would create a lumbering bureaucratic giant which would be of little use to anyone.

**Better to opt for local/regional-based solutions such as giving more powers to local councils, local co-ops, an alliance of small farmers, community groups in urban and rural areas, etc.**

John Cunningham, Adlington, Lancashire.

## Another Europe is possible

### AWL



**In the summer, Workers' Liberty was involved in launching the Workers' Europe initiative, to oppose British withdrawal from the European Union on the basis of campaigning for international working-class solidarity, democracy and migrants' rights.**

Workers' Europe has launched a social media presence, got significant support and interest, and already sent speakers to a number of union branches, Labour Parties and so on.

Meanwhile, others on the left have set up a similar initiative, Another Europe is Possible. AEIP is somewhat "softer" politically and seems less clearly labour movement-focused. Nevertheless, a united left, anti-austerity campaign against "Brexit" can only be a good thing. We have therefore decided to support AEIP, though Workers' Europe will maintain its own distinctive e-presence, propaganda, etc. The key thing is get the debate out there — in trade unions, in the Labour Party and in the student movement in particular — to provide a clear alternative to the all varieties of nationalist perspective, whether Out or In, right or "left".

**Why not begin by moving a motion in your union branch or other organisation, inviting a speaker or organising a debate?**

• Model motion: [www.workersliberty.org/node/25843](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/25843)

Another Europe is Possible: [www.anothereurope.org](http://www.anothereurope.org)

Workers' Europe: [campaign.workerseurope.net](http://campaign.workerseurope.net)



# Portugal: settling for neoliberalism?

On 10 November the conservative Passos Coelho government in Portugal, in office since 2011, fell. It is likely to be replaced by a government of the Socialist Party (SP, similar to pre-Corbyn Labour) supported by the Portuguese Communist Party and the Left Bloc.

Passos Coelho has carried through Portugal's mandated cuts program since it applied for a eurozone "bailout" in April 2011. The SP, which had gone for the bailout, crashed in parliamentary elections in June 2011.

In new elections on 4 October 2015 Passos Coelho lost his parliamentary majority. His bloc was still the largest minority in Parliament, and the president (a long-time leader of Passos Coelho's party, the PSD), initially called on Passos Coelho to continue.

But the SP voted down Passos Coelho on 10 November.

That is welcome. But the SP has said it will continue on the basic terms agreed with the eurozone by Passos Coelho, which are harsh, although Portugal quit "bailout program" status in 2014. The SP will ease some cuts, but that's all.

For a while in October, anti-EU people on social media were passing round the story that Portugal post-election proved that the EU had carried out a "coup" against Portugal's election majority. The story originated in an article in the Tory *Daily Telegraph* (23 October), but was also promoted by left-wingers such as Owen Jones.

That the right-wing president was keen to keep his right-wing crony in office needs no "Brussels conspiracy" to explain it. A similar thing happened in Portugal in 1978.

The Socialist Party had come out ahead in the election in 1976, but needed a minor party to assemble a parliamentary majority. It chose a minor right-wing party, the CDS, rather than the Portuguese Communist Party.

In 1977-8 the CDS withdrew support and brought down the government. The president, Ramalho Eanes, unilaterally appointed an "independent", Nobre da Costa, to form a government on a drastic cuts program, and when Nobre da Costa's administration fell replaced him by the right-winger Mota Pinto.

The episode is an argument against a powerful presidency,



Demonstration against Portugal's austerity program

not an argument in favour of re-erecting barriers between countries in Europe.

The Left Bloc's decision to support a neoliberal SP government should be discussed on the left. The Bloc was formed in 1999 as an alliance of the soft-Maoist UDP, the "Mandelite" Trotskyist PSR, and a Portuguese CP splinter called Política XXI. Its first leader was Francisco Louca of the PSR.

Since then the components have largely dissolved into the Bloc. The APSR, a group within the Bloc set up as a loose successor to the PSR, was dissolved in 2013.

The Bloc's decision follows the same pattern as the decision of Denmark's Red Green Alliance in 2011 to support the Social Democratic government of Helle Thorning Schmidt, which promised some easing within neoliberal parameters but in the event delivered not even that.

But in situations of parliamentary stalemate, the job of revolutionary socialists is to fight for their own independent working-class program, rather than to concede to neoliberalism in the name of parliamentary lesser-evils.

The Bloc's stance also follows the same pattern as Syriza's Left Platform in the early days of the Syriza government in Greece, a stance which led to the Left Platform failing to advocate a clear alternative at the crucial moments.

## End the occupation of West Bank and East Jerusalem!

Since 1 October ten Israelis have been killed in knife, car and gun attacks, with several dozen more injured.

In response to the surge in Palestinian violence, Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 76 Palestinians, including bystanders and unarmed protesters. Over fifteen Palestinian children are among the dead.

The immediate reasons for Palestinian attacks and protests are right-wing Israeli settler violence and the perception that Israel intends to restrict Palestinian access to a Muslim religious site in Jerusalem. The underlying reason, however, is lack of Palestinian hope and the brutal grind of continuing occupation. There is no prospect of a peace deal being negotiated with Israel's right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu.

In the West Bank town of Hebron at least 22 Palestinian deaths have occurred. Last month thousands of Palestinians turned out for the funerals of five teenagers who had been shot by Israeli security forces. In the latest killing a 72-year-old Palestinian woman was shot by Israeli troops. The soldiers claim she attempted to drive her car into them; Palestinian witnesses say she was trying to fill her car up with petrol.

On the same day three Israeli troops were injured in shooting incidents. The military have responded by restricting Palestinian movement, using live ammunition and tear gas against stone-throwing youths, and making arrests.

Hebron is divided into three areas: full Palestinian Authority administration, joint administration between Israeli military forces and PA police, and full Israeli control.

37,000 Palestinians live in Hebron. However thousands of soldiers are stationed in the H2 area of the city, under full Israeli military control, to protect the 600-strong Jewish settler population. Hebron is the site of the al-Ibrahimi Mosque, known to Jews as the Tomb of the Patriarchs and the site

where the Biblical prophet Abraham is believed to be buried.

Many of the Israeli settlers carry government-issued weapons. Some settlers have been accused of provoking Palestinians by glorying in the might of the Israeli army, harassing Palestinians going about their everyday lives with racist chanting and graffiti ("Death to Arabs"), and destruction of property.

In a rational world, access to contested areas and religious places would be governed by agreements as equitable and fair as possible. Not so here, where the Israeli occupation confronts resistance. Unfortunately, the resistance is likely to take an increasingly fundamentalist form.

The solution is for the Israeli state to conclude a peace agreement which includes the creation of a free Palestine alongside Israel.

As part of that process the Israeli government will have to restrain and repress the extremist settlers and their organisations.

### Military out of politics!

Jeremy Corbyn is right to criticise General Nicholas Houghton for inappropriate political interference, after he argued on the BBC's Andrew Marr Show that Corbyn's unwillingness to "press the nuclear button" made him unfit to be Prime Minister. Houghton argued that being prepared to enter a nuclear war will keep Britain safe...

His comments represent a breach of the military's constitutional obligation to stay out of party politics.

Were this to happen more often, it would give the green light to military war-mongers to intervene in all political decision-making.

## We have reached our fundraising target of £15,000!

But we are not stopping here. Please help us carry on fundraising.

You can continue to support us by:

- Getting a subscription to our weekly newspaper, *Solidarity* — [workersliberty.org/subscribe](http://workersliberty.org/subscribe)
- Taking out a monthly standing order.
- Making a one-off donation
- Organising a fundraising event in your local area
- Committing to do a sponsored activity and asking others to sponsor you
- Buying some of our books, posters, autocollants or pamphlets

For information on standing orders or how to donate visit [workersliberty.org/donate](http://workersliberty.org/donate) For more ideas and information on fundraising visit [workersliberty.org/fundraising](http://workersliberty.org/fundraising)

Thanks this week to Steven, Martin, Garry and Lizzie. So far we have raised £15,245.



# Economic policy and creating space

By Colin Foster

Over recent months Jeremy Corbyn, now Labour Party leader, and John McDonnell, now Shadow Chancellor, have made four major statements on economic policy.

Corbyn issued a document, *The Economy in 2020*, on 22 July, as part of his Labour leader campaign. McDonnell spoke at Labour Party conference on 29 September, and wrote articles for the *Guardian* website on 12 August and 12 May.

They are a step forward from what we had from Ed Miliband, let alone what we had from Gordon Brown or Tony Blair. McDonnell and Corbyn commit clearly to restoring union rights and to renationalising rail.

They advocate worker and user control over renationalised rail, and “a real living wage”. They also stress reversing tax cuts at HMRC (the tax agency), efficiently collecting taxes from corporations, and cuts in government subsidies to business.

They say that the mandate of the Bank of England should be changed, and there should be “people’s QE” putting public money into public housing and infrastructure projects.

Corbyn and McDonnell are constrained to step cautiously. The majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party is conservative. Recent Labour Party conferences have had no wide debate about economic strategy, so they cannot appeal much to conference decisions as authority.

Those problems, however, do not constrain rank-and-file Labour and trade-union activists to limit what we say about economics to support of what Corbyn and McDonnell have already said. On the contrary: they underline the importance of us pushing more radical ideas, winning majorities for them, and creating the space for Corbyn and McDonnell to be able to advance further.

Renationalising Royal Mail is already Labour Party conference policy (and adopted unanimously, too). It is a harder one than renationalising rail, because it could not be done just by taking franchises back into public hands as they come up for renewal. But it should be in the policy, and, like rail, with worker and user control.

## PFI

**Labour Party conference in 2012 unanimously voted for the repeal of the Health and Social Care Act, opposed the cuts, demanded the rebuilding of the NHS, paid for by taxing the rich, and call for lifting the exorbitant PFI payments burden on the NHS. That is economic policy too.**

McDonnell says that “energy would be socialised from below by the massive expansion of renewable energy production and supply by local communities, local authorities, and co-ops, on the successful German model...”

German energy production is not socialised, but dominated by four large capitalist corporations, RWE, EnBW, E.ON and Vattenfall. With 27.9% of its production from renewables (2013), some of that from smaller-scale local generation, it has done slightly better than the EU average (24.3%) and much better than the UK (7.7%).

But Germany also generates an exceptionally high, and in recent times rising, proportion of its energy in the highest-carbon-emission, most-polluting form, from coal and other solid fuels (37.4%, ahead of an EU average of 19.7%). Germany is a model neither for socialisation nor for green policy. We should create the space for McDonnell to move to a stronger policy by pushing the idea of nationalisation, under worker and user control, of the power industry.

McDonnell promises “legislation to replace short-term shareholder value with long-term sustainable economic and social responsibilities as the prime objective of companies”, and more regulation of banks.

There already is such legislation, of sorts. The Companies Act 2006 obliges directors to “promote the success of the company for the benefit of its members as a whole” (not just shareholders) and “to have regard to “the impact of the



company’s operations on the community and the environment”.

It has not made British capitalism less rapacious. In Germany, as Ursula von der Leyen, one of Merkel’s ministers notes in an official briefing, “many companies have made corporate social responsibility a central part of their business philosophy. It is the quality parameter of sustainable economic management. Responsible companies reduce their ‘ecological footprint’, respect labour and social standards, and engage in community projects”.

That has not stopped Volkswagen falsifying emission tests on its vehicles on a huge scale, and systematically increasing the rate of exploitation in its factories.

So long as major economic activities are run for profit in a competitive market, and economic power is held by bosses who prioritise and benefit from those profits, codes of conduct and promises of responsibility will always be secondary. They have to. In a capitalist economy, the boss who seriously puts private profit behind social welfare will find herself or himself out-competed by the more rapacious, and driven out of business.

A drive against corporate tax evasion will be good, but it is not a magic bullet. So long as private-profit bosses have essential control, they will shift revenues across borders and employ debt accountants to minimise taxes. To control investments and revenues, the community needs to own the great machines for producing wealth, not just cajole them with regulations.

Particularly important is public ownership of the banks, the hubs of capitalist wealth. John McDonnell feels obliged to respect Gordon Brown’s policy (pushed through unilaterally straight after the 1997 election, with no previous mention to voters, nor to the Labour Party) of “independence” of the Bank of England from political control.

But there is no valid reason why one of the central levers of economic policy should be controlled by unelected officials.

In 1964, the newly-elected, and very moderate, Labour prime minister, Harold Wilson, was quickly confronted by the then governor of the Bank of England, Lord Cromer, with demands for cuts in social spending. Wilson later wrote in his memoirs:

“I asked him if this meant that it was impossible for any government, whatever its party label, whatever its manifesto or the policies on which it fought an election, to continue, unless it immediately reverted to full-scale Tory policies...”

“We had now reached the situation where a newly elected government was being told by international speculators that the policy on which we had fought the election could not be implemented: that the government was to be forced into adoption of Tory policies to which it was fundamentally opposed...”

“The Queen’s First Minister was being asked to bring down the curtain on parliamentary democracy by accepting the doctrine that an election in Britain was a farce, that the British people could not make a choice between policies”.

But Wilson did what Cromer asked. We should be seeking to increase democratic control over the running of the Bank of England, not to reaffirm the absence of control.

**Economic policy is not just about techniques for promoting growth. It is about what sort of growth, for whom, controlled by whom, at the expense of whom. As Lenin succinctly put it, the central question is “who, whom”. Labour activists should create space for that question to be discussed.**

# Our politics

In July 1990 *Socialist Organiser*, a forerunner of *Solidarity*, was banned by the Labour Party, apparently on the instigation of Frank Field MP, the same Frank Field who now floats the idea of Labour right-wingers contesting elections as “independent” against democratically selected candidates of Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party.

A challenge to the ban at the 1990 Labour Party conference won a majority of Constituency Labour Party delegate votes, but failed to overturn it.

Then, as in the current moves against associates or alleged associates of Workers’ Liberty, the “defendant” received no charges and was given no hearing in which to reply to them. *Socialist Organiser* was able to reply to the charges only because by chance it received through unofficial channels a copy of the document presented to Labour’s National Executive. The document built its case by saying *Socialist Organiser* was like *Militant* (forerunner of today’s Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal), which had been banned in 1986, and was a “Leninist sect”.

*Socialist Organiser* had actively campaigned against the banning of *Militant*. And we upheld the political ideals and tradition associated with Lenin. We also explained that our way of doing politics was different from the model of the “Leninism” shaped after Lenin’s death by the Stalinists and then, to one degree or another, adopted by some anti-Stalinist groups.

The article below was part of our reply.

By Sean Matgamna

**The document [presented to Labour’s National Executive by National Organiser Joyce Gould] lays out the thesis that *Socialist Organiser* is an organisation like *Militant*. Now I opposed and oppose the proscription of *Militant*. I believe that where *Militant* acts harmfully it must be fought politically. But it is false to equate *Socialist Organiser* with *Militant*.**

The document tries to “prove” its case in two ways. The first stage of one “proof” is asserting that all such groups as *Militant* are formed around one individual; *Socialist Organiser* is said to be so organised around myself; *Socialist Organiser* and myself are thus asserted to be identical; and my alleged history then recounted to prove *Socialist Organiser* is what it is alleged to be.

The second way of “proving” that *Socialist Organiser* is like *Militant* is to make assertions about how the supporters of *Socialist Organiser* organise to produce, circulate and sustain the paper.

The document’s account of both my history and how *Socialist Organiser* supporters organise ourselves is riddled with inaccuracies big and little, many of them preposterous. Worse than that, however, from the authors’ point of view, is the palpable fact though they are engaged in pontificating about the nature of “Leninist” groups and of sects like *Militant*, the WRP and the SWP, to which they allege *Socialist Organiser* is identical, they plainly do not understand how such sects function or what it is that gives them their special character.

If they had bothered to do any research into *Socialist Organiser* — even to the extent of leafing through a file of the paper — they could not have made that mistake. If you place Gerry Healy’s WRP at one end of the spectrum, the SWP at the other and *Militant* in the centre, you see important differences but also certain things in common which give such sects their character. They are organised as tight single-faction organisations. There is a pro-designated leadership, and a narrowly defined set of ideas which function as shibboleths and are not open to discussion.

Internal dissent is not allowed, or is allowed only so long as it does not impinge on the cardinal doctrines of the group. Dissent in the public press is very, very rare, and for most such groups simply unknown. Minorities are not allowed to form factions. The possibility of putting up an across-the-board alternative slate on a distinct political platform to chal-



# and the “Leninist” caricature

lenge the incumbent leadership simply does not exist.

It ceased to exist, for example, in the loosest and most nearly civilised of such groups in Britain, the SWP, years ago (about the time I parted company with that organisation).

But more than that: I have only sketched in the formalities and structures. There is also the spirit of these groups. It is the spirit of the narrow, persecuting religious sect. The feeling and emotions and commitment which are a necessary part of any sustained activity around the old socialist programme of replacing capitalism by “the cooperative commonwealth” are all focused on the group, on its particular ideas and shibboleths, and on its own claimed identity as “the party”, the Church of the Lord.

It is that spirit — cultivated and cherished by the organisers of the groups listed above — which gives the final stamp to the groups’ character as sects. From the spirit flows intolerance, the transmutation of ideas supposedly based on theorising about an evolving and changing world into religious dogmas, believed on faith and separating the faithful and the saved from the sinners and deservedly damned.

Such quasi-religious formations need intolerance, need a “party regime” that keeps an iron grip, need the typical internal atmosphere of an intense religious cult — or they disintegrate. They need certainties and dogmas and infallible leaders, and these can be sustained in place only when dissent is forbidden or limited and ritualised.

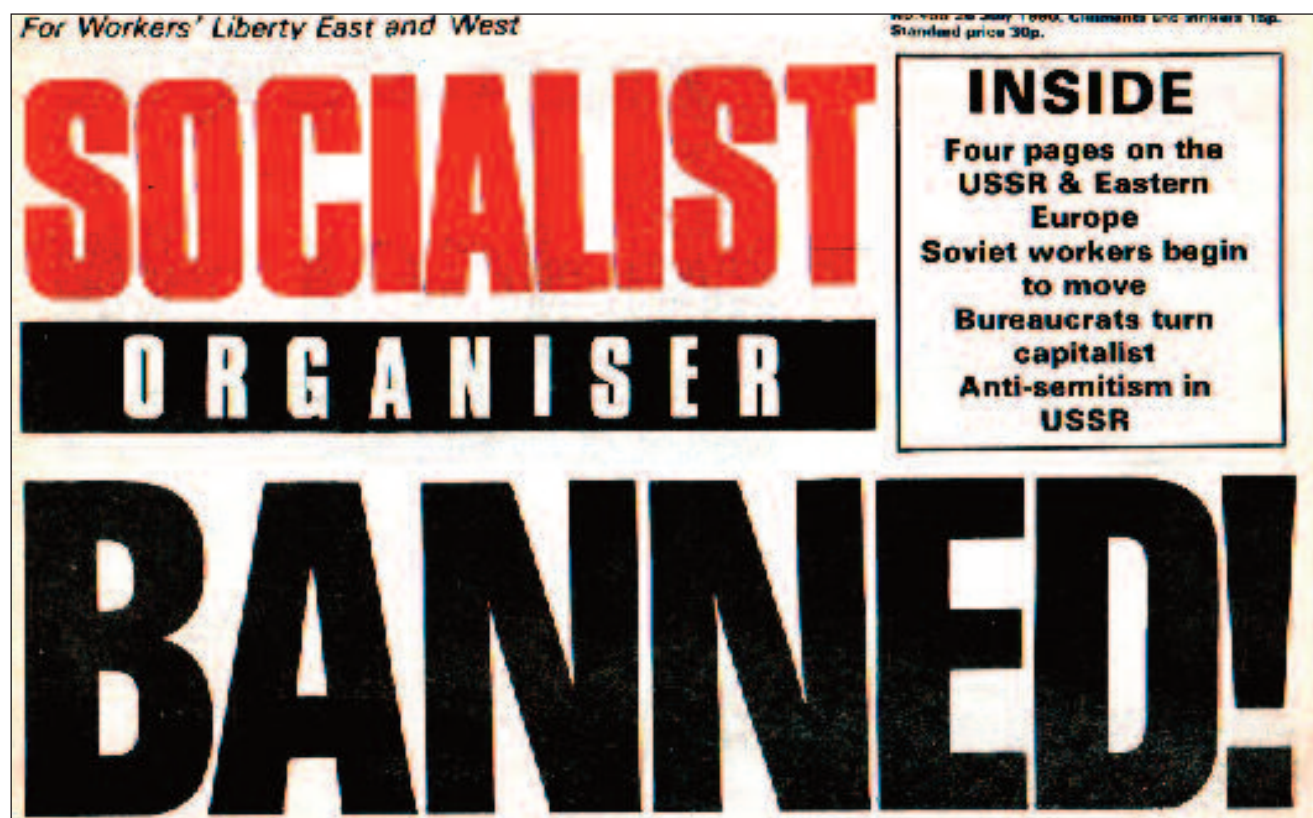
## AWKWARD

**A political culture in which every participant has the taken-for-granted right to disagree with the majority, to pose awkward questions about both ideas and individuals, and to express his or her opinions and proselytise for them in word and writing would be anathema to the quasi-religious “Leninist” sects.**

Contact with that way of working would dissolve the pretensions of the leaders of such cults, dissipate the holy aura surrounding the ideas for which they function as a priestly caste. For that reason such groups not only control or stifle elements of such an approach within their own ranks, but they also cultivate and foment extreme hostility and hatred for it when it comes from outside their own band. Instead of teaching their supporters to reason about the world, they teach them dogmas. Complicated theories are reduced to phrases packaging hopes and wishes about, for example, the Middle East or Ireland, which then fill the space that should be filled by a rational account of the world we have to deal with.

That is the spirit of the cults and the sects, ranging from the still relatively civilised SWP through to the *Militant* and beyond to the old, openly crazy WRP.

Demonstrably *Socialist Organiser* is not of that type. Nobody who reads the paper could honestly make a case that we belong to that spectrum of politics. A few SO supporters, and most prominently myself long ago, have a distant back-



ground in such political formations. But we have tried to learn the lesson of the awful fate of the people who try to be honest socialists but tragically fall back into the primitive semi-religious approach characteristic of the dawn of the labour movements in the last century and earlier.

*Socialist Organiser* conducts its discussions openly in the pages of our paper. There are no sacrosanct ideas or individuals that cannot be discussed or questioned, no religious awe around either our ideas or our activities. To a considerable extent, the debates that should have occupied the whole Left, but have been absent from it, have taken place in *Socialist Organiser* over the last ten or so years. The list of subjects is a long one.

Strategy for the left in local government occupied *Socialist Organiser* in the early '80s; nobody could write a serious history of the left of that period without using the *Socialist Organiser* discussions as essential raw material. Even after most of those who thought the best course was high rates [local property taxes which councils then levied] had parted company with *Socialist Organiser*, the discussion continued.

We have had the only debates on the left in the '80s on the European Community. The same with Ireland: in no other paper has there been a wide-ranging discussion — a discussion involving participants from the full range of the left — on Ireland's long war. We have discussed the Arab-Israeli conflict at length, and, more recently, the nature of the old systems in Eastern Europe.

In those discussions the people who are assigned the roles of high priests and gurus in the document Joyce Gould uses have had to participate “on the floor”, arguing their case with the same rights as other participants and no privileges. I am SO's pope according to the document: the pages of the paper show me arguing in democratic debate — and not infrequently being abused — on questions ranging from Ireland through Europe to the Middle East. I have been in the minority in some of those debates — on the Middle East, for example — for a long, long time. If *Socialist Organiser* were in fact organised like the cults and sects I have described above, then it would dissolve when its alleged gurus and leaders were subjected to such rules and such treatment, when the freedom in the pages of the paper exercised by *Socialist Organiser* supporters challenged the leading ideas with argument, scorn, irony or denial. In fact *Socialist Organiser* has thrived on such discussion because we are a democratic collective, committed to rational democratic working-class pol-

itics, not a cult with gurus and disciples.

The indisputable evidence of what *Socialist Organiser* is, is there for the examining in the files of the paper. A sect like, say, *Militant* could not survive if it ran an open paper like *Socialist Organiser*. In short, the attempt by the author of Joyce Gould's document to identify *Socialist Organiser* with the “Leninist” cults shows simply that the author does not understand the nature of the thing he or she wants to denounce. The author gets all the detail of how. *Socialist Organiser* functions wrong, but even if some of it were accurate he or she would still be like the small child who notices that matches are red and then tries to make matches by dipping sticks in red paint.

**The author simply does not understand the nature of the things being compared and analysed, does not understand why they are what they are and how it all fits together.**

## Defending the tradition of Lenin

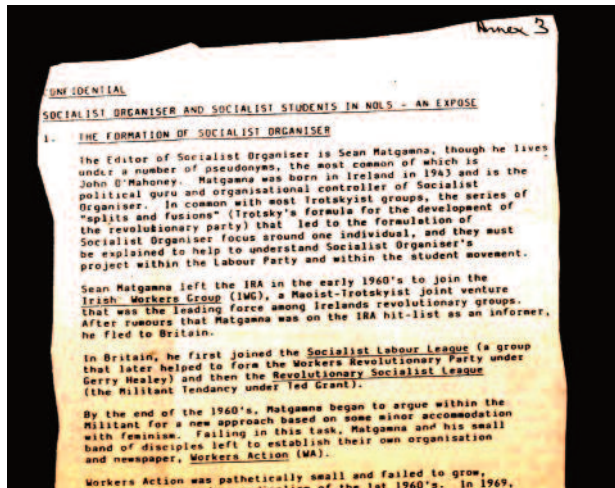
**I do not repudiate the tradition of Lenin and those who made the great working-class revolution in Russia in 1917. On the contrary, I believe that I defend that tradition as it really was.**

That the outcome in history of the 1917 revolution was — by way of Stalinist counter-revolution — a negative and horrible outcome, was not the fault of Lenin or his “tradition”, but of those socialists in the West (those in whose “tradition” the majority of Labour's NEC are proud to stand) who left the Russian workers in the lurch and made their peace with their own ruling class.

Rosa Luxemburg, who was a bitter and forceful critic of some things the Bolsheviks did as well as being their partisan, said it all very well in 1918, in the course of criticising Lenin and his comrades.

“Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary far-sightedness, and consistency in an historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky, and the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honour and capacity which western social democracy lacked were represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian revolution, it was also the salvation of the honour of international socialism”.

**Post-Stalinist socialism will have to be rethought, and the elements of socialism recast. Lenin's tradition will and should be part of that process.**



The “exposé” on *Socialist Organiser* presented to the NEC



# Syria: continuation and containment of war

By Simon Nelson

**The US Government will deploy a group of special-ops forces to northern Syria to help the “Syrian Democratic Forces” (SDF), the multi-ethnic opposition that the US has positively “vetted”, and is now willing to publicly arm and support.**

The US liberal magazine *Mother Jones* cites a White House official “the leadership of these groups are vetted as individuals for human rights abuses and ties to terrorism”

The SDF is dominated by the Kurdish Peoples’ Defence Units (YPG), linked to the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK). But by the YPG going under a different banner, both they and the US have more room to manoeuvre over support without provoking tension and opposition from Turkey or smaller Arab militias.

The US plans to deploy fewer than 50 soldiers. They will be based in Kurdish controlled territories. The situation remains chaotic. Airdrops of weapons to smaller groups have frequently gone missing. The YPG has reportedly had to intervene to redistribute arms and collect weapons. Those Arab forces that the US backs do not have the capacity or the experience to operate effectively.

The US has backed a number of so-called moderate forces since the original uprising began in Syria in 2011. These fronts and groups have fallen in and out of favour as well as dissolving or merging with jihadist groups. A force which is dominated by Kurds has an advantage for the US — it is largely secular.

But the YPG has been focused on defending the autonomous province of Rojava in northern Syria and other Kurdish territories. It has been less focused on ending the Assad dictatorship or reclaiming Arab dominated areas of Syria. It is very unlikely to drive Daesh (Islamic State) from Syria.

In the meantime the US has increased its use of airstrikes, deploying fighter jets to Turkish airbases and increasing military aid to Jordan and Lebanon. Diplomatic efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis remain ongoing, with the US Secretary of State John Kerry opening up the latest round of diplomatic talks to Iran. Other participants included Russia, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The view of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee that it would be a mistake for the UK to join airstrikes in Syria makes it increasingly unlikely that Cameron will bring a vote to the Commons on this issue.

The continuation and containment of the war now appears to be the main goal of the US and coalition forces. Neither side in Syria is absolutely dominant or likely to make vast territorial or political gains. This may mean there is time for a compromise to be worked out, but it also means prolonging the suffering and mass killing that has dominated Syria for the last four years.

## RUSSIA

**Russian jets have largely avoided Kurdish-controlled areas and the increasing use of deconfliction talks has ensured that US and Russian airstrikes are not undertaken in the same areas.**

If it turns out that Daesh is responsible for bringing down the Russian plane over the Sinai Peninsula, that could shift the focus of the Russian airstrikes and commit Russia to become more deeply involved in the region.

An estimated 7,000 fighters from the Russian Federation and former Soviet states are fighting for Daesh in Syria. Much like Cameron, Merkel and Hollande, Putin is concerned about returning fighters making attacks in Russia, particularly in Chechnya.

Russia has deployed more than 50 combat aircraft in Syria, along with an estimated 4,000 troops, technicians and advisers



**The wreckage of a Russian plane which disintegrated on 31 October. It is claimed the plane could have been brought down by a bomb — [bit.ly/7K9268](http://bit.ly/7K9268)**

alongside troops that provide security and support to Russian bases and military hardware

Putin’s strategy was that the Russian Air Force would bolster the weakened military forces under Bashar al-Assad, allowing Syrian forces to strengthen their hold on Syria and then to take on the Daesh strongholds in western Syria, using Syrian and allied ground forces.

Alexei Makarkin, an analyst at the Center for Political Technologies, outlines two main options for Russia: “Russia can intensify the Syria operation, send more troops and volunteers to support Assad.” Or “fighting the Islamic State will become a priority rather than supporting Assad.”

The first option will continue to pose Russian intervention in opposition to western efforts but will be a continuation of their policy of backing the “legitimate” leader of Syria.

**The second option would bring Russia further into line with other airstrikes.**

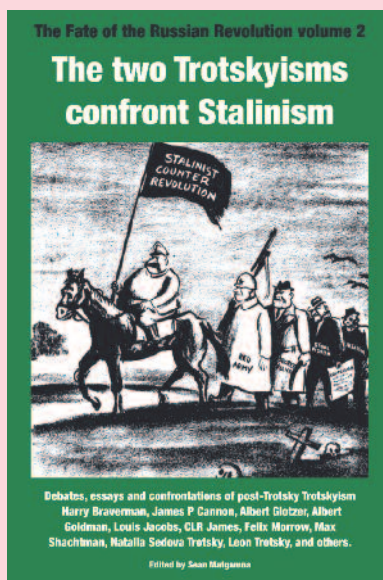
## The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism

**Buy a copy online!**

**[www.workersliberty.org/node/25483](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/25483)**

**£19.99, or £23 including UK postage.**

**Reading groups are happening across the country. Check [thetwotrotskyisms.org](http://thetwotrotskyisms.org) for details**



## Strikes on the rise in China

By Gemma Short

**Strikes and other forms of industrial action are on the increase in China, as an economic slowdown leads to layoffs, withheld wages, and factory closures.**

*China Labour Bulletin* (CLB), an independent labour rights organisation based in Hong Kong, reports 593 strike incidents in the third quarter of 2015. There were 372 in the same period of 2014, and 185 in 2013 Q3. 37% of these were in manufacturing and 31% in construction.

CLB notes that many of the disputes in the past months were due to large scale lay-offs. In August 2,000 workers held a week-long protest outside their paper making factory in Yongzhou, Hunan, after management failed to organise a compensation scheme for the impending closure of the factory.

Workers in industries as different as coal mines and breweries have become victims of the economic slowdown. In September a state owned coal mining company announced the lay off of 100,000 workers over three months. Workers at the company had been involved in strikes over non-payment of wages in April. China’s National Coal Association says 70% of its companies are facing a loss, and the last year has seen 57 strikes in the industry, including a strike of 3,000 miners in Chongqing over the sudden closure of their mine.

Figures are unclear, but it seems that large-scale manufacturing for export concentrated in areas such as Guangdong Province is being scaled-back or relocated. CLB reports that there have been wide-spread layoffs and factory closures in Guangdong Province as a result of government initiated restructuring.

Many companies are relocating their factories to new areas or decentralising production over a number of new areas. It is highly likely that this is a deliberate response, by the government and companies, to the increasing level of working class militancy and organisation in the Province.

Guangdong has been the area with most working-class organisation and strikes in the recent past. It also has the highest frequency of police intervention in industrial disputes. On 9 October four workers were beaten by police and eight arrested



**Workers outside the paper factory in Yongzhou in August**

during a strike at an electronics factory in Dongguan. Yet workers are learning and organising ways of protecting themselves and fighting against victimisations. They have been organising mass protests at and petitions of police stations to get activists released.

Though Guangdong still has as many strikes, its share of the national total continues to decline, down from 34.6 percent in the third quarter of 2013 to 19.1 percent in 2014, and probably less in 2015. Strikes are spreading geographically and into different industries, either as a result of deliberate restructuring on the part of industry bosses and the government, or as a result of the increased use of social media spreading organisation. It is likely to be due to a combination of both.

The increased use of social media by Chinese workers and activists to plan activity and communicate across the country may increase reporting of strikes, and also increases the number of strikes.

Sadly it also seems more workers are becoming desperate. The number of workers climbing on to rooftops and threatened to jump has increased, with six such incidents in Dongguan alone in the third quarter of 2015.

**In Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province, there were three incidents in the span of just ten days, causing some to dub it “the jumper city.”**

• *China Labour Bulletin*: [www.clb.org.hk/en/](http://www.clb.org.hk/en/)



# Indonesians demand action against corporate arsonists

By Janet Burstall

**On 26 days in September and October, carbon emissions from Indonesia's peat and forest fires equalled the daily emissions of the entire US economy.**

The Washington-based World Resources Institute (WRI) also calculated that over the course of a three week period from late September, the output of carbon dioxide from the fires during three weeks from late September exceeded Germany's annual total carbon emissions.

Land concession owners illegally light fires every year in Indonesia. Arson is the cheapest way to clear the land before planting oil palms. The fires have caught the world's attention this year. The haze has spread even further than usual, affecting people across Indonesia, including the capital Jakarta, and in neighbouring Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. The fires are worse this year because El Nino (periodic warming of the Pacific ocean) has brought intense drought to South East Asia.

The burning forests are on peatland that has been drained. Peatlands store vast quantities of carbon, and the conversion of a single hectare of Indonesian peatland rainforest releases up to 6,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Tropical deforestation is currently responsible for about 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, making it a significant contributor to climate change. The fires form part of a vicious circle, increasing carbon emissions, which in turn contribute to the El Nino effect, which increases the frequency and intensity of droughts, which make forest fires more extensive and harder to put out.

The Indonesian National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) identified over half a million people suffering Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) in six provinces between July 1 to 23 October 2015 and 43 million people exposed to the smoke. A BNPB spokesperson told CNN Indonesia that the "catastrophic fire and smoke are man-made disasters because 99 percent of the causes of forest and land fires are intentional."

Going outdoors is dangerous, schools have been closed, hospitals and health clinics stretched, young children and their families have been evacuated. Endangered species are being killed and their habitat destroyed.

Economic losses from damage to agriculture, forest degradation, health, transportation, and tourism are estimated at \$14 billion to \$30 billion.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

**GAPKI, Indonesia's palm oil trade association, claims that the industry is the victim of a smear campaign.**

But recent photos show freshly planted oil palm seedlings in the burned peatlands. The first photos were tweeted by a public official, Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, head of Centre for Data, Information, and Public Relations of Indonesia's National Disaster Management Agency.

Head of the Criminal Investigation Police Agency Commissioner said police had identified seven companies with foreign capital owners as suspects in the alleged arson. Five of the seven are Malaysian, one is Chinese. An alleged Australian connection is due to a stake of less than 1%.

However, the largest oil companies, Sinar Mas and Wilmar, have not been named by police. According to the Forum for the Environment (WALHI), most burning forests are owned by the Wilmar group.

Friends of the Earth Indonesia (Walhi-Jambi.com) says that Wilmar has 27 affiliated companies or subsidiaries, and Sinar Mas has 19, with forest fires in Central Kalimantan, South Sumatra, Riau and Jambi.

Wilmar, the world's leading palm oil company, is involved in 100 land conflicts and human rights violations in Indonesia alone. Sinar Mas has cleared tropical rainforest all over the country for its palm oil plantations, and is still expanding rapidly. Sustainable agriculture website Alimenterre says "After having been denounced for human rights abuses, Wilmar, the largest palm oil trading company in the world, has been ranked as environmentally the worst performing firm as far as it concerns its environmental footprints and management."

The Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forests (KLHK) estimated the losses caused by the 2015 fires to be far in excess of the cost of corruption in Indonesia, which is generally recognised as a critical cost to the country.

Greenpeace had warned in 2011 that then President Yud-



Demonstration in Pekanbaru against palm oil companies

hoyono's "moratorium" on forest destruction was too limited to protect the vast majority of forests that provide habitat to orang-utans, tigers and other endangered species, and would do little to protect additional forests. Instead changes to government regulations have made it easier for corporations to clear forests, as identified by Indonesia Corruption Watch.

Corporations found guilty of breaking the Environment Act can be fined from 3-10 billion Rp (GBP1.5 million – GBP5million). The KLHK claims the obstacles to successful prosecutions of the guilty include remote locations, difficulty of collecting conclusive evidence, insufficient experts to collect evidence, and a judiciary inexperienced in environmental law.

Greenpeace has also identified Indonesian government's failure to release concession maps for many years, which makes it impossible to know who is likely to have burned the land and hold them to account.

By late October people were organising campaigns and holding protest rallies in several provinces, demanding government action.

Groups included the Alliance of North Sumatra People Against Haze, and Green Knights (Satria Hijau). The Teachers' Forum Against Haze gathered 3,000 teachers calling on the government to declare the haze a national disaster as it had claimed lives. In West Sumatra, hundreds of students in face masks marched from Belakang Balok to the Bukittinggi city legislative council building. In Padang students and activists from the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi) distributed masks and leaflets to motorists.

In Riau province at least two groups have organised rallies

of thousands. A new action group Revolusi Langit Biru, or Blue Sky Revolution, rallied, dressed in blue. Thousands of university students, teachers and lecturers in Pekanbaru marched from their campus to occupy the yard of the Riau governor's office, calling their rally "Pledge against Haze". The protesters began to lower the national flag, but police stopped them.

- The Jakarta Post reported the demands of the Riau rally:
- The revocation of a gubernatorial decree allowing burning of land in certain areas
  - The arrest of directors of corporations that burn land and the seizure of company assets
  - Medical help for remote villages affected by the haze
  - Revocation of half of all palm oil and industrial forest plantation permits to prevent haze in the future
  - All political parties to establish medical centres to help residents suffering from haze-related diseases, or face boycott during the next regional elections

## ORGANISING AGAINST THE FIRES

**Activism amongst farmers against the land-grabbing of corporations has a longer history than the anti-haze protests. Organisations such as the Agrarian Resource Centre propose alternative approaches to land use.**

One proposal is to damn all the drainage canals that cause the peatlands to dry out. There are an estimated 2 million km of drainage canals in Indonesia's peatlands, many built by companies. Areas that have been reflooded are less prone to catch fire, and the canals behind the dams fill with fish during the wet season, providing locals food and income during drier months.

The majority of the reported protests against the haze involve students and teachers in schools and universities, farmers, and environmental activists. Trade unions in Indonesia have organised energetic protests against the government on the cost of living, jobs and wages, in September and again in October. The trade union movement has been rejuvenating since a wave of protests in 2011-2012, causing headaches for the government.

**If the environmental and health movements sparked by the haze can link up with the newly energised trade union movement, it could be a taking off point for an alternative conception for the Indonesian economy, and for the Indonesian working class and farmers to unite against the combined ravages of corporate greed and corruption in government and administration.**



The largest palm oil producers:	Major palm oil traders:	The largest individual consumers of palm oil:
Wilmar, IOI and Sinar Mas	Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM)	Unilever, Nestlé, Procter & Gamble and Henkel According to its own figures, the Unilever Group alone consumes 1.6 million tons of palm oil every year (2008).

Rainforest rescue has identified the major corporations in the chain of palm oil production.



# The three versions of Brexit

By Harry Glass

In the forthcoming European Union (EU) referendum, the question on the ballot paper will be “Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?”

The duty of the revolutionary left is to weigh up these concrete alternatives from the perspective of the working class internationally — its global interests, its European interests and lastly the specific impacts for workers in the UK.

Three possibilities are being floated, the first of which is not an actual alternative at all, while the others, whatever their nuances, are universally worse for working class interests.

The first “alternative” propagated by some on the left such as Owen Jones, the SWP and Socialist Party, and some within the RMT leadership, is left-exit, or “Lexit”. The second might be called “EU-lite”, meaning the UK would have a trading relationship with the EU like Norway, Switzerland or perhaps Turkey. The third, and most likely scenario, is the “neoliberal nirvana”, whereby the British state charts its own course within the hurricane forces of globalised capitalism.

The idea of a left exit from the EU is not just fanciful, it is utterly delusional. It is clear from the pro-business “Remain” campaign and the equally pro-business “Leave” campaigns that the terrain for leaving the EU is far from working class political economy. Those driving the exit campaign are among the most reactionary, anti-working class forces in British politics, whether they are from UKIP or the “even-further-far right”, or from within the Tory party.

Brexit under these circumstances would be the result of a racist, anti-migrant, chauvinist deluge, one which would completely swamp the sideshow arguments of Lexit advocates. If such chauvinist forces are able to coalesce and sweep to victory, it would come off the back of an orgy of nationalism that would threaten the existence of the left. It will ramp up the series of measures designed to punish and isolate migrant workers already in the UK and those who hope to live here, and would spill over into racist attacks on minority ethnic communities already established, including people of colour born in the UK. With 7.7 million foreign-born people (including 2.6 million EU-born citizens) living in the UK, such an assault will be highly divisive and utterly reactionary.

The “Socialist United States of Europe” will not be an option on the ballot paper in this referendum. The path to a Socialist United States of Europe can only come from forging closer ties of solidarity with other European workers, fighting across an increasingly integrated terrain created by capital and its states.

It is ridiculous to counterpose workers across the rest of the globe to unity with workers across Europe; in fact global working class solidarity and European worker links are part of the same internationalist approach.

The concessions to nationalism already visible with the *Morning Star*, the *Socialist*, some RMT leaders and from Lexit Labour MPs shows the dangers of accommodation on this front. The way to convince workers who express hostile opinions about Europe and/or migrant workers is not to agree with them and then add a few caveats about the “real” enemy. It is to take the argument about the necessity of international solidarity head on. We need to outline demands for levelling up conditions across Europe as part of the fight for socialism.

## NORWAY

**Some on the left and others on the right are promoting the view that not much would change in the event of Brexit.**

They say that given the levels of trade between the UK and the rest of the EU, the British state could quickly negotiate a looser, mostly trading relationship with the EU — something like the current arrangement with Norway or Switzerland, or further afield, the customs union with Turkey. This sounds plausible, but it ignores key problems.

The EU is by far Britain’s biggest trading partner, accounting for 45% of UK goods and services exports and 50% of imports. Britain’s next biggest trading partner is the US. The UK is the EU’s top destination for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), winning one in five projects in recent years. Although



An “improved” UKIP billboard during the 2014 European elections.

the UK government pays £17 billion for membership, once rebates and regional grants are factored in the net contribution is nearer £8 billion (figures from David Charter, *Europe: In or Out?* 2014). Those are the immediate economic realities that Brexit throws into the air.

The Norway option is the most limited. Norway, which has huge oil revenues and largely opposed EU entry in order to protect its farmers, still contributes billions to belong to the associated European Economic Area (EEA, along with Iceland and Liechtenstein).

Under this arrangement, these states pay for the privilege of trade access and still have to abide by EU laws relating to the four “freedoms” of capital, people, goods and services. They therefore implement the bulk of EU law without having a significant say in its content or scope, because they are not represented politically within the EU structures. Thus the UK leaving would have none of the alleged benefits but retain and worsen the costs, particularly the democratic deficit.

Much the same is true of Switzerland. Swiss people rejected the EEA in a referendum in 1992 and Switzerland remains part of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). Its parliament retains the power to scrutinise and reject EU law, but in practice transposes more than half of them anyway. It has a trade agreement with the EU on goods but not for services, no doubt to protect its indigenous finance capital. It is also absent from EU political structures.

Finally, Turkey currently has a customs union, an even looser trading relationship.

## CLOSE OFF

**These arrangements might suit some sections of business, but they close off the existing, truncated but nevertheless extant democratic channels that European workers can use to advance political demands.**

More significantly, these arrangements have been negotiated by the EU and other European powers because they see these states as potential members at some point, when international and domestic circumstances might allow it. That will not be the direction of travel after Brexit: other European states may judge that they don’t need the UK and adapt accordingly. This would cut off workers in the UK from our sisters and brothers, putting up further barriers to solidarity and making joint struggles harder to fight.

The final Brexit scenario and the one most likely to unfold given the current balance of forces is the “neoliberal nirvana”, or what UKIP MP Douglas Carswell has reportedly referred to as “Singapore on steroids”.

In this scenario, the UK state will make its own trade agreements, beyond the current WTO arrangements. In this set up, the UK can deregulate and adapt flexibly around the imperatives of global capitalism. The UK would become offshore what Singapore or Hong Kong are to Asian economies — a conduit for trade and investment from across the globe.

Open Europe, a Eurosceptic thinktank, published a report earlier this year, “What if...? The consequences, challenges and opportunities facing Britain outside the EU”.

It stated that the consequences of UK withdrawal would range between a 0.8% permanent loss to GDP and a 0.6% permanent gain in GDP by 2030, depending on the mix of policy approaches. It rejected the Norway and Switzerland options as unsuitable for the UK, but argued that with more liberal trade arrangements and large-scale deregulation at home,

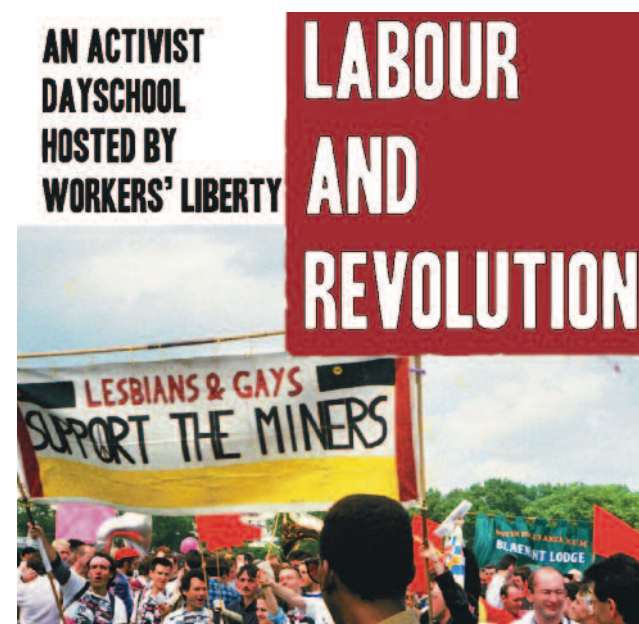
economic “gains” (for capital) could be made.

Beneath the diplomatic language, the report revealed that even in neo-liberal calculations, UK capital outside the EU could thrive within global capitalism only through more thoroughgoing TTIP-style treaties, more privatisation, and slashing working time, safety and other EU-derived laws. The warning for the working class is stark: quitting the EU in current circumstances will unleash a wholesale neoliberal assault on the gains won by workers in the UK over decades of struggle. The result could well trigger a similar attack across the EU as it reels from Brexit. Such downward pressure would also hit workers across the globe, defenestrating labour movements and atomising workers in a neoliberal wave. In short, this neoliberal nightmare is the most likely scenario as envisaged by bourgeois thinkers in the aftermath of Brexit.

The labour movement across Europe and in Britain must not pretend that the EU is a workers’ paradise. It remains a bosses club that mostly promotes capitalist interests, the concentration of capital and the interpenetration of European bourgeois states. But at present for workers, being inside the EU is the lesser evil compared with the quantifiable, well-defined alternatives offered by the bourgeoisie after Brexit.

Socialists across Europe have to fight to reform the EU, expanding the democratic space for workers to organise in and levelling up economic, social and political rights across the continent. That is the strategic line for uniting European workers to fight for reform and ultimately for socialism. Brexit cuts across that orientation.

**Using the fight for the UK to remain in the EU for refurbishing the British labour movement, making solidarity with migrant workers and making direct links with militants across the continent is the best approach for Marxists in these conditions.**



Saturday 28 November, 12 noon. Anatomy G.04, UCL, Gower St, London. [bit.ly/labourrev](http://bit.ly/labourrev)



## Vote John Burgess!

**Ballot papers in the Unison General Secretary election will have now arrived with members. The election closes on 4 December.**

Workers' Liberty members and supporters in Unison are backing John Burgess, and so is the majority of the Unison Left NEC caucus. John is Barnet Local Government Branch Secretary; he has an impressive record of leading a series of fights against the so called "easycouncil" in Barnet and in defence of public services.

Other candidates are incumbent Dave Prentis; Heather Wakefield, who represents a section of the bureaucracy split from Prentis; and the Socialist Party's Roger Bannister.

John was nominated by 68 branches across the country and by the Unison South East Region, and has the backing of the majority of the left. Roger Bannister scraped onto the ballot paper with just the 25 nominations needed. We think that it is a shame that he did not step down in favour of a unified left candidate. Dishonestly, Roger Bannister's leaflets are designed to look like the ma-

terials from the Corbyn campaign, despite the Socialist Party's position on unions disaffiliating from the Labour Party!

There is an enormous democratic deficit in Unison that will not be mended just by electing left-wingers to the NEC or as General Secretary.

As part of the election campaign it is important we continue to raise demands including rank-and-file control of disputes, elected strike committees, defeating the anti-trade union laws, democratising the Labour link and then taking the fight to the Labour Party, pushing for greater branch resources and being creative in our action. John Burgess has been raising these issues in his campaign.

Activists, even those not in Unison, should help get the vote out for John.

**They can leaflet large workplaces like council offices and hospitals, or taking leaflets into schools, colleges and universities.**

• [johnburgess4gensec.blogspot.co.uk](mailto:johnburgess4gensec.blogspot.co.uk)

# Save Lambeth libraries

**By a library worker**

**Hundreds of Lambeth workers and residents came together to march from Brixton Library to South Lambeth Library on Saturday 7 November to protest against cuts and closures to their library service.**

Friends of Libraries Groups from each library have rejected attempts by the Council to pit library against library and community against community. A campaigner from West Norwood Friends groups said;

"Whether your local library is 'safe' or whether it is one which is immediately threatened, local communities must stand together and say defend the ten! We won't stay quiet just because we don't face closure right now and we won't say cut their library not mine. Why should a child wanting to study or an elderly person looking for advice and support be faced with a postcode lottery?"

Campaigners' spirits were undampened by the pouring rain. They sang and chanted and on arrival demanded the Cabinet

member come out and face them to explain her decision. Councillors refused to brave the rain or criticism, branding the march "intimidating". The Save Libraries Twitter soon responded showing babies in push chairs and children singing save libraries songs accompanied by the message;

"If @JaneEdbrooke is intimidated by this, no wonder she's too scared to fight the Tories on cuts"

### CLOSURES

**Lambeth Council has announced it will "decommission" half of Lambeth's libraries.**

Minet, South Lambeth, Durning, Upper Norwood, Carnegie and Waterloo are all under threat. Waterloo will be sold, Upper Norwood Library will be passed over to an external organisation for an alternative use, and Carnegie, Minet and South Lambeth or Durning will become mini-gyms run by Greenwich Leisure Limited as part of the unpopular Culture 2020 proposals.

Ruth Cashman, library worker and Unison representative, called for the



campaign to continue:

"Communities like ours cannot afford to lose our public libraries, These plans are idiotic and show a council out of touch with the people of Lambeth and the direction of the Labour Party. The Council are on shaky ground, and we are determined to fight on until we save all ten libraries. Everyone must be at next Tuesday's call-in."

Library workers are balloting for strike action,

Labour Party activists are putting resolutions to their wards and CLPs. There will be a legal challenge to proposals. Community campaigns are organising days of action and letter writing, and if it comes to it will occupy to save Lambeth Council from itself.

**"We want to stand with Lambeth Council against the government, but if they won't stand up then we will fight on without them."**

## FE pay strikes

**By Peggy Carter**

**UCU and Unison members in FE colleges struck today (10 November) in a dispute over an imposed pay freeze.**

In the last six years FE lecturers have seen their pay decrease in real terms as employers have offered a series of below-inflation pay rises — totaling less than 3% since 2009. Both unions are also seeking a

guarantee that workers won't be paid below the living wage. The pay freeze comes in the context of ever tightening budgets for FE colleges, with many colleges having already gone through many rounds of course closures and redundancies.

**Workers held picket lines at colleges on the morning of the strike, with rallies being held after picket lines in London and Birmingham.**

## Hungry for justice

**By Charlotte Zalens**

**GMB, Bakers Food and Allied Workers' Union, and Fast Food Rights activists protested on 10 November at fast food outlets across the country.**

They protested in solidarity with #FightFor\$15 strikes in the USA and to demand a £10 living wage for fast food workers in the UK. Protests happened in

Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, London, Bolton, Bradford, Salford and Sheffield. In the US fast food strikes are being organised by the SEIU union, and have been growing in the past year.

**GMB is also organising workers in Marks and Spencers depots across the country, and has organised protests against casualised working practices in M&S's Swindon depot.**

## Fighting for respect



**By Gemma Short**

**NUT members at The Joan Roan school in Greenwich are on strike today (10 November) in a dispute over observations, workload, and marking.**

Teachers say that unrealistic marking policies and a testing culture is driving up workload to unsustainable levels, leaving teachers exhausted and demoralised. Teachers at the school say they are fighting for something more than a better policy on workload and observations. They are fighting for respect, for the next generation of teachers who

should be able to stay in the classroom for more than three years without giving up due to stress and exhaustion, and for their students who would like to see the same teachers last longer than a few terms.

Teachers across the country are facing increasing workload and scrutiny. Hopefully strikes like that at Joan Roan school will inspire others to fight back.

**Teachers organised picket lines outside the school, and leafleted parents in the lead-up to the strike and on the day.**

• Messages of support to: [johnroannut@gmail.com](mailto:johnroannut@gmail.com)



## Solidarity wins!

**By Tubeworker bulletin**

**A sustained union campaign, including a strike ballot amongst Piccadilly Line drivers, has secured the reinstatement of sacked worker Paul Okoro.**

Paul was sacked for allegedly answering his phone while in the cab, even though witnesses attest that he handed over control of the train before doing so.

Paul, who has been out of work since May, has been reinstated as a CSA. Lon-

don Underground had previously insisted that reinstatement was out of the question. This is another example of how union pressure can change the balance of forces and force management's hand. What was once impossible suddenly becomes possible.

RMT drivers are still in dispute with Piccadilly Line management around a variety of issues and may still take action.

**Paul's reinstatement should provide inspiration for a number of other ongoing reinstatement struggles across the job. Solidarity wins!**





# Solidarity

No 384  
11 November  
2015

30p/80p

## Winter crisis: rebuild the NHS

By Peter Campbell

**Regardless of the validity of meteorological predictions by the *Express*, this winter is set to be the worst on record for the patients of the National Health Service.**

Even Chief Executives of Hospital Trusts are beginning to cry out in alarm. Chris Smallwood, Chief Executive of St George's Foundation Trust recently told the *Guardian*, "The NHS is heading for a real smash, and practically everyone running a hospital knows it. Hospitals are at 100% capacity at the moment."

Last winter, Accident and Emergency departments missed their targets (of a maximum four hour waiting time for patients) every week. Some believe that this year the strain will be much worse.

As Smallwood notes, finances are at the root of the problem. He said the NHS has done something remarkable in the past five years. The fact it the NHS is still here at all is astounding, because no healthcare system in the world, ever, has managed to sustain a service over such a prolonged period with so little investment and rising demand.

Smallwood is right. But this is not down to luck. It is down to the sacrifice of hard working staff across the service, who shouldered an incredible burden over the last winter.

Recent OECD and Nuffield Trust estimates suggest that the UK needs over 47,000 more nurses and over 26,000 more doctors just to reach the average of other developed countries. (The fact that the NHS provides world leading care in these circumstances highlights its effectiveness.)

As healthcare workers are increasingly being asked to provide more, for less, the government presses on with their political propaganda of providing a seven day NHS. The fact is the NHS already provides a seven-day acute and emergency service. It treats anyone who really needs to seen at a weekend. The Head of the Royal College of Physicians believes that to provide an elective seven day service would require an extra 38,000 doctors! Not to mention pharmacy staff, physios, occupational therapists, radiologists, ward clerks, nurses, healthcare assistants.

Under the current government and financial situation talk of this kind of seven-day service is only a rhetorical device for the Secretary of State for Health.

Austerity has laid waste to social care, with billions in funding cuts leading to over 300,000 fewer over 65s receiving care at home. As winter bites the old and frail will end up at the door of Accident and Emergency.

At the same time there is a projected £2 billion budget deficit for NHS providers. The estimated budget deficit by the end of the parliament is £30 billion, and so 2-3% cuts a year are required. The Conservatives pledged an extra £8 billion during the general election but the NHS has not yet seen this money. Without a radical upturn in funding we will see hospital trusts collapse.

The response from Health Authorities to the coming winter crisis is advertising campaigns encouraging people to see their pharmacist if unwell, and to ensure their homes are heated properly. That is not much good to the 2.3 million living in fuel poverty.

### ROOT

**Hospital trusts will be forced to cut staff numbers further, lengthen waiting times and decrease the quality of service. No other outcome is foreseeable.**

We need to argue and fight for root and branch change within our NHS. Front line health workers have performed incredible feats to keep our NHS alive. Imagine what they could do if they were genuinely empowered and given the resources to do their jobs without current stresses. To do this, they are going to have to learn to fight back.

The junior doctors' and Antrim nurses' disputes are showing the rest of the health workforce that if they want to defend patient care they are going to have to use collective strategies of struggle, including industrial action.

The NHS needs at least £5 billion a year extra just to maintain itself. We spend a relatively small amount of money in the UK on healthcare, for which we get incredible results. But we cannot just put money into the NHS. We need to radically transform the role of the workforce.

We need to rebuild our social care system, as the two

work hand in hand. We need to refocus our public health system on the social determinants of health, on poverty and inequality. We need to save our education system from rampant privatisation to ensure that we can train the next generation of health workers.

**The fight to save the NHS cannot be won alone in isolation from the fight for a future better society.**

**The Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt's recent "firm contract offer" to junior doctors has succeeded in causing further anger.**

The offer, leaked to the press and then emailed to individual junior doctors via the organisations in charge of delivering their training, was reported as an 11% pay rise. However it quickly became clear that it was in fact a huge pay cut.

Junior doctors are currently being balloted for industrial action by the British Medical Association over the government's decision to impose a new contract upon them by August 2016.

This contract will remove key financial safeguards which prevent doctors from being overworked. It will have a detrimental impact on those who take time out of work for training, education or to raise a family. It also reclassifies normal working hours as Monday to Friday 7am to 10pm and Saturday 7am to 7pm.

The latest contract offer from the Department of Health is seen as particularly sly as it has been released at the same time as a pay calculator. This calculator promises "pay protection" to all current junior doctors based on their current salary. It is through this mechanism that the Secretary of State can claim no junior doctor faces a pay cut. However pay protection will only last until 2019, when most juniors will still be on the contract, and does nothing for current medical students, those out of training on maternity leave or study.

**The ballot for action closes on 18 November with the results set to be announced shortly after. We expect a "yes".**

## Keep up the fight against Trade Union Bill!

**The Trade Union Bill is getting a third reading in the House of Commons as Solidarity goes to press on 10 November.**

Campaigners with Right to Strike have taken a 17 metre long banner reading "Don't shackle our unions" to hold in front of Parliament and leafleted the public.

The Trade Union Coordinating Group has organised a protest for 6pm in Parliament Square, also supported by Right to Strike.

The TUC has hailed great "concessions" in the new

version of the bill. But only the rules on notifying police and employers in advance of the use of social media in industrial disputes, which were largely unworkable anyway have been dropped.

The TUC claimed concessions were made on criminalising of picketing. In fact proposals which target effective picketing are still in place. There is still a requirement for a picket supervisor who is approved by the union and gives their details to the police and employer; breaking picketing

laws will still become a criminal offence rather than a civil one.

In addition, the massively expanded role and powers of the Certification Office and Officer are a huge threat to unions' independence and free organising.

Right to Strike will be organising protests outside Parliament as the bill moves on to the Lords.

**We encourage activists to organise protests, street stalls, leafletting and other actions across the country.**

